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For Immediate Release  
January 16, 2004

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## **Hammerstrom works to increase cancer awareness**

*Senator stresses prevention is key to fighting cervical cancer*

**January 16, 2004** – January has been designated by many organizations as Cervical Cancer Screening Month. As part of the national “Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer” campaign, Senator Beverly S. Hammerstrom (R-Temperance) will introduce legislation to establish a task force to raise public awareness of the disease. The main goal of the task force will be to identify ways state officials can facilitate better education about cervical cancer and screening programs for Michigan women, particularly for underserved women.

The Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer campaign was launched this month by Women in Government, a bi-partisan, non-profit, educational association of elected and appointed women in state government. Hammerstrom, who was recently elected Vice Chair of the organization’s Board of Directors, was appointed to a 2003 Cervical Cancer Task Force where members were educated about the disease and the virus shown to cause it, human papillomavirus, or HPV.

“Approximately 12,200 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year in this country,” said Hammerstrom. “Although the survival rate is higher than in past years, 4,100 women are still dying. Since cervical cancer is the most preventable type of cancer, this is the first time ever that we are able to essentially stop the disease before it starts. The only way that we can effectively do this is through educating women and encouraging them to discuss the issue with their doctors.”

(More)

Studies have shown that the number of women diagnosed with cervical cancer has decreased significantly in the last 60 years, due largely to the increase in women who receive cancer screenings. Today, advanced screening methods are available, making it a strong possibility to eliminate this disease altogether.

Hammerstrom, who chairs the Senate Health Policy Committee, says prevention can be as easy as getting annual examinations from a gynecologist. “There are new and more effective screening tests available that allow doctors to detect pre-cancerous cells and treat them before the disease can develop,” she said. “Unfortunately, there is still a significant number of women who do not get annual exams.”

According to recent studies, approximately half of all women diagnosed with cervical cancer have never been screened, and 10 percent of those diagnosed have not been screened in the last five years. Studies also show that the number of women who have been screened is lower among those with lower income levels and the uninsured.

“No woman should die of cervical cancer,” said Hammerstrom. “I encourage my Lansing colleagues to join me in my efforts to educate Michigan women about ways to prevent and detect cervical cancer. This is our strongest weapon in the fight against this deadly disease.”

For more information about cervical cancer, including current statistics and links to organizations such as the American Cancer Society, please visit Senator Hammerstrom’s website at: [www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hammerstrom](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hammerstrom).

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